



What About Corporal Punishment?

The United States is one of the few developed nations in the world that continues to condone corporal punishment. Over 30 states either authorize the practice of corporal punishment or have taken no stand concerning its use. Only 16 states have legislation against the practice of corporal punishment. Corporal punishment seems to be an accepted educational practice in the United States.

Despite American failure to proscribe corporal punishment, the practice continues to be questioned by researchers and professionals. A complex and emotional issue, corporal punishment also arouses disagreement and debate among educators and the public. Proponents support their position with long tradition, biblical teachings, and claimed effectiveness. Opponents base their arguments on behavioral principles, empirical findings, and moral reasoning. In the face of these stands, the actual uses and misuses of corporal punishment are often obscured by emotion and tradition.

Corporal Punishment—Benefits and Costs

Corporal punishment conceivably might be considered to have several benefits. It may indeed suppress—but not eliminate—the behaviors in response to which it is used. It is quickly administered and apparently works quickly, particularly when used in anger. It requires no training or skill—only superior physical size and strength. It provides an outlet and a target for the punisher's anger and frustration. In considering this list, we were surprised to note an interesting point: Almost all of the benefits of corporal punishment accrue to the punisher! Relatively few positive effects for the punished child can be identified.

The costs for the use of corporal punishment, on the other hand, are ominously heavy and much more evenly shared. They include costs to the punisher, to the child, to the school, and to society. The punisher, in modeling aggression as a method of solving problems, risks retaliatory aggression from the punished child. This fact may explain the relative infrequency of the use of corporal punishment in response to adolescent misbehavior in comparison with its use with younger children. Also, the punisher may have increased difficulty in establishing open, trust-based communication with a child following the use of corporal punishment. Corporal punishment may therefore make the disciplinary efforts of the punisher more difficult and less effective than other, more positive, techniques.

Corporal punishment is also costly to children who are punished. Corporal punishment increases alienation and anxiety in children and decreases interest in and commitment to the school (Wayson, 1985). Such punishment has a similar effect on other students who have not been so punished, but who are aware of the punishment. Also, whereas corporal punishment cannot teach a child to behave appropriately in the classroom, it can teach the child avoidance and deviousness. A student can make the connection between spanking and getting caught just as easily as that student can make the connection between spanking and misbehaving. Corporal punishment thus has negative affective and behavioral effects on the punished child. At the least, these effects may make the task of learning self-discipline even harder for punished children.

Within the school, the use of corporal punishment may produce an anxious, fearful, angry, and aggressive climate. Such a climate may actually cause many of the problems that corporal punishment was originally used to remediate (Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982). Corporal punishment may create a cycle of negative emotions and behavior that requires sterner and sterner measures to stem. Few teachers or students like to work in such a punitive, jail-like environment. Absenteeism and dropouts may often result from the negative climate caused by the use of corporal punishment.

Because corporal punishment models and legitimizes aggression, causes anxiety and withdrawal, and contributes to dropping out, it may also constitute a substantial cost to society (Bauer, Dubanoski, Yamauchi, & Honbo, 1990; Wayson, 1985). Problem solving via violence and aggression, learned in childhood, likely carries over into adulthood. Child abuse and violent crime may therefore trace their origin to corporal punishment. Adolescents who drop out to avoid corporal punishment pose an additional burden on society in their greater rates of unemployment, illiteracy, and maladaptiveness.

Alternatives to Corporal Punishment

Instead of focusing on the negative aspects of corporal punishment, we have found it helpful to think of several positive alternatives to the practice. Alternatives to corporal punishment can be organized into four levels of interventions that address individual student problems, classroomwide problems, school-level and/or support-system problems, and district- or system-level problems. This intervention scheme focuses on the most specific to the broadest level of problem resolution.

Individual Students

A number of individual interventions for behavior management or discipline problems, many with demonstrated effectiveness, are available to school personnel. Most of these also are quite efficient and require little additional training. Of these, perhaps

the behavioral or behavior management techniques have the greatest demonstrated effectiveness in the research literature. Many of these involve reinforcement; some use rewards, whereas others use the removal of rewards. All of the techniques in this paradigm have two things in common: They are effective, and they do not use painful or aversive procedures; that is, punishment is not involved.

With younger children, reward approaches often are most effective. These approaches may involve, for example, attending to and reinforcing positive behaviors or reinforcing behaviors that are incompatible with targeted problem behaviors. It is important here to determine what is maintaining the problem behavior so that strategically applied rewards can have a positive effect. For example, if contingencies controlling a target behavior are not under the teacher's control (e.g., the misbehaving student is performing for the class, not for the teacher), then removal from those reinforcing contingencies may be more effective than removal of teacher reinforcement or reinforcement of incompatible behaviors. Significantly, ignoring the misbehavior in this study probably will not have an ameliorative effect.

Older students, due to their increased size, more developed behavioral repertoires, and increased autonomy, may be less responsive to interventions that directly manipulate reinforcement contingencies. Therefore, it may be harder to control these contingencies with adolescents than with elementary children. Two strategies, however, have been demonstrated to be effective in managing adolescent behavior. Both include involving adolescents and/or their parents in taking responsibility for behavior and its consequences. The first technique, contracting with problem adolescents for improved behavior, allows them to have input into defining their own problem behaviors, specifying behavioral goals toward appropriate behavior, and establishing reinforcement contingencies. Contracting also involves these adolescents in monitoring and controlling their own behavior.

The second technique, sending behavioral report cards to parents (also called home-based reinforcement), has been shown to improve negative behavior significantly in adolescents (Atkeson & Forehand, 1979). We have found this technique to be particu-

larly useful with unmotivated students. Behavioral report cards are similar to academic report cards, but emphasize behavior—both positive and negative. Because parents often have control of contingencies not available to educational personnel, this intervention potentially is more powerful and meaningful in changing adolescents' behavior. In addition, parents benefit from increased contact with and information from the school. Home-based reinforcement requires minimal time and maintenance when compared to its potential benefits.

Another intervention, in-school suspension, has been presented earlier in this book. In-school suspension can be combined with behavioral contracting (Figure 6.1) and behavioral report cards (Figure 6.2) to produce an effective deterrent to student misbehavior. When done properly, in-school suspension may provide alternative in-school options for even very difficult-to-manage students. Significantly, in-school suspension programs may be most effective when they avoid punishment (Short & Noblit, 1985).

In particularly severe cases at both the elementary and the secondary levels, additional services often are available. Guidance counselors and school psychologists have multiple skills in counseling and behavior management programs. Alternative placements, such as crisis classrooms or alternative programs, have been used and are available for inspection as model programs and effective alternatives to corporal punishment.

Classroom Alternatives

Several classroom strategies that improve behavior without punishment are readily available to teachers. Although broad characteristics of such strategies have been presented in Chapter 3, two powerful examples of these procedures follow.

1. Teachers should develop a few clear, simple classroom rules and consequences with their classes and review them periodically to reinforce their practice and use. Whenever possible, teachers should adapt these classroom rules to changing characteristics of the class and the school year.

Behavior Contract

Date: _____

I, _____, will do the
following by _____:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

When I have done the above, the following will happen:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Signed by:

Witnessed by:

Figure 6.1. A Sample Behavior Contract

2. Teachers should deliver prompt and appropriate consequences when students violate *and when they comply with*

Behavior Report Card

Date: _____

Name: _____

Marked boxes show that listed behaviors were present during the times indicated.

Behavior	Class Activity						
	1	2	3	Lunch	4	5	6
Shared with other children							
Asked for permission before leaving seat							
Completed assignments							

Observations:

Comments:

Figure 6.2. A Sample Daily Behavioral Report Card

classroom rules. For inappropriate behavior, rapid but unobtrusive interventions can stop present behavior and prevent

escalation in the future. For appropriate behavior, teachers can reinforce with free time or desirable activities. In the end, consequences should fit infractions (e.g., taking away a portion of free time or recess rather than ail of that time or activity), as well as compliance.

Several other teacher behaviors may preclude the use of punishment by facilitating good classroom behavior (Kounin, 1970). One of these, which Kounin called "withitness," involves the teacher's awareness of the overall classroom process and happenings. Another, smooth and rapid transition between activities, requires the teacher's prior planning of activities and good organizational skills. A third, maintaining a positive, involved classroom climate, also influences positive student behavior, as does emphasizing on-task behaviors (Short & Short, 1988). All of these behaviors, and others, are within teachers' control and encourage good student behavior. Again, it is important to note that these are documented behavior change strategies; none involve corporal punishment and all supplant the need for its use.

Teacher Support and Training

Teachers often receive little formal training in classroom discipline in their teacher training programs. Without such training, it may be easier to resort to force and corporal punishment as a behavior control strategy. This places a burden on in-service training and workshops, which can provide an excellent way to remedy these training gaps and ineffective practices. Although they have limited effectiveness data, teacher-training programs such as Assertive Discipline (Canter, 1979) and Reality Therapy (Glasser, 1969) represent good examples of predeveloped training packages. Both of these packages are readily available and often are well accepted by teachers.

Administrative support of teachers in the area of classroom discipline and behavior management also influences student behavior (Short & Short, 1988). Principals and educational supervisors can provide individual support, information on model programs,

and ongoing planning for improved discipline. They can provide opportunities for teachers and staff to share their ideas about classroom management and to support each other professionally. In difficult cases, they also effectively may intervene directly to aid the teacher.

System-Level Techniques

Several school systems have developed systemwide strategies to improve discipline without the use of corporal punishment. These techniques are proactive and preventive in nature. At a basic level, all school systems should have a written school policy or mission statement addressing the need for and steps toward positive school climate. Also, a written discipline code that describes positive expectations as opposed to punitive consequences is critical; this directly alerts students to acceptable and unacceptable behaviors in school and classroom settings. If possible, parents, school personnel, community leaders, and students all should be involved in developing the code. This involvement should increase commitment to the code and further strengthen relations with the community. Finally, a continuum of program options for extremely disruptive students should be available to teachers and administrators for special cases that necessitate a departure from the discipline code.

Clearly, many of these techniques are directed mainly toward improved classroom atmosphere and school climate. However, research has documented that increased student involvement and decreased levels of disruptive behavior are directly related to positive school environment. Because corporal punishment often engenders fear and aversion, it is difficult to maintain an affirmative milieu where the threat of corporal punishment is present. Although eliminating the use of corporal punishment may not result automatically in a positive school environment, it may set the stage for more positive interactions with students, parents, and school officials. Schools that do not use corporal punishment may be more positive environments with more involved students and teachers. As a result, such schools may actually experience

fewer discipline problems than schools that use corporal punishment. Also, schools that use alternatives to corporal punishment may experience fewer dropouts and fewer incidents of vandalism (Bongiovanni, 1979).



The New Discipline in Practice

An Administrator's Perspective

When all is said and done, we know that student discipline continues to be the most consistently discussed problem in the public schools and the problem that most plagues educators. As mentioned earlier, discipline traditionally has been someone making a decision about the appropriate punishment to match the committed "crime." Almost always the focus of discipline was, and in too many cases still is, punishment.

Successful discipline is as challenging to administrators as modern medical practices are to the hocus-pocus rituals of tribal medicine men. Reale (1966) has noted, "The task of the teacher on his job is to translate the principles of democratic discipline into daily action in the classroom" (p. 254). Upon reflection, we find a question about how democratic our public schools are and can be.

The two national reports, *A Nation At Risk* and *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America*, caused many, both inside and outside education, to reassess the problems of discipline management. The resulting educational discipline movement produced

more rules and emphasized consistency in applying those rules and regulations as a desired outcome of a discipline process. Seminars, group discussions, and other forms of staff development for educators were used to achieve the consistency they sought in this movement.

However, the continuing concern among these served causes us to conclude that the current system is not working. There are continued attempts of a variety of actions along the lines of character growth or behavior adjustment. Punishment is perceived as a means and not a goal, and the mandate is to change the student's behavior while keeping the student within the educational setting (Kortz, 1986).

The response to this demand for effective discipline is more openness to local input resulting in many varied opinions and many opportunities for appeal if one party is not pleased with the result of the initial discipline outcomes. What should cause concern is that the focus is still on punishment. The absence of prevention in the discipline process is a question still to be addressed. The business of education is effective learning. An effective communication system or process is absolutely necessary for teachers to teach, for students to learn, and for individuals to be successful.

Classroom control is considered to be a prerequisite to classroom learning. The basic philosophy traditionally has been that children and youth who are well disciplined direct their interests, efforts, and abilities toward greater achievement. Those who are not disciplined waste their own individual opportunities and make learning difficult for classmates.

Eugene Manlove Rhodes, western writer, taught school in Alto, New Mexico, in 1891. His pupils remember him as an exceptional instructor. One noted, "When he called a class up to recite, he closed the textbook and stood before his class and taught. When he finished with us, there was nothing about that lesson we didn't know" (Rhodes, 1956, p. 28). But early in his teaching experience he was forced to establish himself as being in control of the classroom. The slight and scholarly Rhodes learned that some of the older male members of the one-room school planned to whip him and run him off. As he opened class one morning, Rhodes

pulled his pistol from his belt, laid it on the desk, and called the class to order. Rhodes had the reputation of a man who would "fight a buzz saw with it running" (Rhodes, 1956, p. 108). This young teacher knew that classroom discipline was his job.

But what is discipline? The word and concept are derived from the Latin *discipulus* ("pupil desire to learn"). That Latin verb is different from the traditional aspect of punishment intended to correct or train that always focuses on short-term gains. Wrapped up in the Latin verb is the long-term training that is expected to produce mental as well as moral improvement.

The task is to view discipline as a system that is a part of the larger learning system. If the learning system is doing what it is supposed to do, would there be any discipline problems other than special causes? Discipline problems may result in students being uninterested, unengaged, and/or unfulfilled. Schools may need to improve the way students feel about schooling. Discipline with its present emphasis on punishment is a symptom of something amiss in the larger learning system.

The Proposal to Address the Contradiction: One School's Effort

Educators at Newman Smith High School realized that most of the students who were being seen for discipline referrals fit the profile of at-risk students. Something was needed to improve self-esteem of students. This issue had to be addressed before any significant changes in school for these youngsters would be realized. All of these students were individuals capable of doing well in school but for some reason were not performing up to their potential. These students tended to be multitime visitors in the in-house suspension program.

We struggled with strategies to improve life in school for students. All teachers were given instruction in the techniques of communication. The approach combined a series of written questions designed to guide a discussion to break the negative patterns for struggling teenagers who were searching to find their niche in a fast-changing world. It also taught people how to communicate

not only with the significant others in their lives but also with people they did not know and with people they have had trouble communicating with in the past.

This process offers tools that enable the participants to get to know and understand each other. Participants look at their personal identities, their options and value systems, their emotions and how they express them, and different perspectives on effective speaking and listening. They explore how they choose their friends, how body language is read, and how to increase the possibilities of solving interpersonal problems effectively. One of the tools that guides a teenager to more mature thinking is a clear communication process. This can be taught through a questioning process that elicits understandable information from the participants. Guilford (1977) suggests that the habit of asking questions prods the brain into activity.

We found in our school that through the interactions and dialogue with students and teachers, the two prime actors in the schooling process, individuals learned to cope, successfully or unsuccessfully. Both students and teachers experienced many confrontations and possible discipline problems, in which expertise in communication skills made a major difference in how individuals felt about school and the instruction they received or gave.

The number of students who need dialogue with a teacher during the typical class period is staggering when multiplied by the number of students, hours, and classes. Yet, effective communication between the student and teacher is necessary for academic success. The ability to ask questions, respond clearly, and express ideas effectively are necessary skills for the student in the learning environment.

Hurt, Scott, and McCroskey (1978) note, "One of the clearest results from research in communication is that people are influenced primarily by those toward whom they have a positive attitude" (p. 116). In classrooms it was essential that the student, in order to accomplish the desired learning, have a positive regard for the teacher, which helped to eliminate the problems that escalate into punishment-type problems (Hurt, Scott, & McCroskey, 1978).

Final Thoughts

The image of the stern, fierce schoolmarm perseveres in the public mind; indeed, that image is cherished in many memories as a powerful force in educational backgrounds. But even if those memories are accurate, times have changed. The student population is considerably more diverse and complex now, and the problems they face are much different from those with which we dealt. This diversity requires moving beyond the timeworn punitive approaches that too often constitute discipline programs.

In many cases, these punitive approaches have interacted with complex student characteristics to produce two outcomes. First, students who experience traditional strategies become alienated from schools and education—much like their parents before them. Such alienation has been shown to lead to negative outcomes such as dropping out, substance abuse, and delinquency. Second, students who have been disciplined may become resistant and resentful in the classroom. This makes the teacher's job even more difficult. We suggest that there are ways of designing discipline approaches that build student self-discipline and self-esteem and that create an environment in schools that is receptive to the needs of all students.

Annotated Bibliography

- Alpert, B. (1991). Students' resistance in the classroom. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 22(4), 350-366.

Subtle forms of resistance found during ethnographic observation of two suburban high school English classes with 65 students are not found in a third class of 31 suburban high school students. The dialectical attitude of resistance and compliance is influenced by teaching approach and style of classroom interaction.

- Arent, R. P. (1991). To tell the truth. *Learning*, 19(6), 72-73.

Discusses what teachers should do when older elementary students lie. Guidelines for handling the situation are presented along with suggestions for making children feel good about telling the truth. Three activities for encouraging truthfulness in the classroom are suggested.

- Elliot, W. L. (1991). *RE-FOCUS Program—Redefine efforts: Focus on change under supervision* [A support program for students and teachers]. Kansas City, MO: Hickman Mills Consolidated School District 1.

The RE-FOCUS Program at Ruskin High School in Kansas City, Missouri, helps at-risk students to redefine their efforts in social behavior and academic success. When inappropriate behavior occurs and the classroom teacher needs assistance, the student is taken out of his or her regular school environment and assigned in the RE-FOCUS room. The program, an alternative to out-of-school suspension and traditional in-school suspension, keeps the student in the home school, yet not involved in the school's social environment. Seven teachers, a different one each hour, supervise the RE-FOCUS room. Each hour and day, teachers give instruction to students on their social behavior, why they were assigned, and how they can correct their behavior. The second part of the hour, the student works on academic subjects with the assistance of the supervising teacher. In addition, the student's regular teachers are encouraged to stop by the RE-FOCUS room to encourage the student. To help insure positive reinforcement for the student, negative statements are not used in the RE-FOCUS room. Academic success is promoted by teaching appropriate social skills through planned teaching, effective praise, and social skills teaching techniques. Students can be assigned to RE-FOCUS for 1 to 7 hours or for a maximum of 10 days, but are encouraged to appeal their stay after the 3-day minimum. During the program, supervising teachers, regular teachers, and administrators are responsible for documenting the students' progress. (Attachments include an hourly study schedule, a point total sheet, a daily attendance form, a social skills curriculum, a disciplinary report, and RE-FOCUS assignment sheets.)

Fernandez-Balboa, J. M. (1990). Helping novice teachers handle discipline problems. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 62(7), 50-54.

Explains factors that influence novice teachers' discipline problems to help students, novice teachers, and teacher educators deal with the problems. The article describes assertiveness as a process for dealing with and preventing such problems and discusses reasons why it can be useful and effective.

- French, D. (1991). *A focus on discipline and attendance: Structuring schools for student success*. Boston: Massachusetts State Board of Education.

The effectiveness and applicability of student discipline and attendance policies in Massachusetts' public schools are addressed in this report. Following an introduction, the second section presents a review of research and examines seven assumptions about current statewide discipline and attendance practices in light of recent findings. Recommendations are made in the third section, which advocates reexamining discipline, attendance, and academic punishment policies and implementing alternatives. Suggestions are offered for school practitioners in the following areas: staff development, discipline and attendance policies, governance and structure, curriculum and instruction, classroom management, student and family support, special needs students, and assessment and planning. The fourth section presents alternative practices that have been implemented by seven Massachusetts' schools and one Connecticut school. Legal requirements for the Massachusetts' public school discipline and attendance policies are listed in the final section.

- Gaustad, J. (1990). *Gangs* (Report No. 20). Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EA 52)

An increase in gang violence and mobility in the last 20 years has alarmed members of the public school community. Gang membership, formation, location, and growth are described. Strategies to counteract gang activity, such as school discipline policies, school and community prevention programs, information sharing networks, and state legislation, are discussed.

- Gottfredson, D. C. (1990). *Managing adolescent behavior: A multi-year, multi-school experiment* (Report No. 50). Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools, Baltimore, MD: Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.

A 3-year program was implemented in eight middle schools in the Charleston County School District (South Carolina) in fall 1986 to cope with high rates of student misconduct. The program sought to improve the clarity of school rules and the consistency of rule enforcement, classroom organization and management, frequency of communication to the home regarding student behavior, and reinforcement for appropriate behavior. The use of school improvement teams and feedback to foster program implementation is described along with numerous measures used to assess program implementation. Program results indicate that the strength and fidelity of implementation varied considerably from school to school and were tied to the level of administrator support for the program. Student conduct improved significantly in schools where the program was implemented well. Speculations about effective discipline programs conclude the document. Appended are 10 tables and 1 figure.

Hunter, D. R. (1990). *How to increase assistant principals' involvement in class management: Tips for principals from NASSP*. Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Strategies for principals to increase their assistant principals' involvement in classroom management and to fulfill their positions as instructional leaders are described in this bulletin. Strategies include (a) introduction, implementation, and reinforcement of classroom management skills; (b) development of partnerships with teachers; (c) understanding and adjusting classroom dynamics; (d) establishing student responsibility; (e) use of a systematic approach to discipline; (f) involvement of all staff to create a positive atmosphere; (g) use of support services; (h) enhancement and motivation of teachers; and (i) assignment of assistant principals to different duties. The strategies stress discipline problem prevention through increased involvement in classroom management.

Layne, D. J., & Grossnickle, D. R. (1990, October 21-24). *Real school safety depends upon safe-oriented discipline policies*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Illinois Principals Association, Chicago, IL.

Issues relevant to the formation and implementation of clearly defined and enforceable discipline policies to maintain a secure school environment are discussed in this paper. One area of tension exists between the development of stricter discipline policies for student standards of conduct and students' constitutional rights. Conclusions are that discipline policies require school/parent cooperation, explicit standards, and cooperation between all educational stakeholders. Seven broad goals proposed by the National School Safety Center are briefly outlined. Included are examples of one school's guidelines for drug testing, identification of at-risk students, discipline policy, dress code, and athletic training rules.

- Opuni, K. (1991). *Student Assignment Centers: An in-school suspension program, 1990-91*. Houston Independent School District, TX: Department of Research and Evaluation.

The effectiveness of the Student Assignment Center program (SAC), an in-school suspension program implemented in the Houston Independent School District, is evaluated in this report. The program provides instructional and counseling support services for middle school students who risk suspension or expulsion for conduct code violations. Goals are to improve students' attitudes and behaviors through motivational techniques and to improve their organizational skills and study habits. Methodology involved surveys of SAC staff, principals, and teachers at 19 participating middle schools; student attitude surveys; and analysis of program recidivism rates. Findings indicate that, overall, the program was partially effective in achieving its goals—particularly, in improving the recidivism rate and classroom environments. However, deficiencies identified by respondents formed the basis for several recommendations, one of which is to combine long- and short-term frameworks. Nine tables and six figures are included. The appendix lists SAC resources.

- Roquemore, B. C. (1991, March). *The academic motivations of students who are discipline problems*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of School Administrators, New Orleans, LA.

This study examined the academic motivation of the first students (25 from each school) in the 1990-91 school year in each of four schools in grades 9 through 12 who were suspended from school or placed in in-school suspension programs for repeated offenses (disrupting class, exhibiting aggressive behavior toward school authorities or peers, or refusing to follow directions or accept punishment). The Student Motivation Diagnostic Questionnaire was administered to the students. Findings indicated that students in all four schools scored lowest in the areas of self-concept and attitudes toward teachers. It is suggested that intervention programs could counteract students' low self-concepts and negative attitudes toward teachers. Such programs would include: parent training; teacher staff development; school programs that focus on one-on-one relationships with students; remediation of academic difficulties; and administrative monitoring of individual teachers and evaluation of the school environment. Four tables are included.

Sperry, D. J. (1990, August 12-17). *The imposition of automatic grade and credit reductions for violations of school attendance and disciplinary rules: Analysis and implications for practice*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, Los Angeles, CA.

Cases related to school policies that mandate or lead to automatic grade and/or credit reduction are reviewed in this study. Standard legal research methods were used to analyze 14 appellate and state court cases, which were categorized according to the type of sanction invoked: student suspension for violation of a disciplinary rule; automatic loss of grade points and/or credits for excessive absences; and direct treatment of unexcused absences. Findings indicate that courts are hesitant to intervene in the judgments of school officials, despite sympathy for students' rights. Recommendations for development of school discipline policies include (a) recognition of the controversial nature of such discipline policies; (b) adoption of a policy statement that clarifies the meaning of academic grades; (c) avoidance of conflict with state statutes,

particularly those protecting the practice of religious beliefs; and (d) consideration of legislative enactments and/or local school board regulation as alternative measures.

- Stover, D. (1992). Special discipline for special kids. *American School Board Journal*, 179(1), 40-42.

Because of the importance of preventing inappropriate disciplinary measures for special education students and those with disabilities, school boards should direct administrators to set specific procedures and limits on disciplinary measures, boost staff development programs, and establish open communication with parents.

- Walker, H. M. (1990). Middle school behavioral profiles of antisocial and at-risk control boys: Descriptive and predictive outcomes. *Exceptionality: A Research Journal*, 1(1), 61-77.

In studies of school behavior adjustment involving 39 antisocial and 41 at-risk middle school boys, extremely problematic behavior profiles were found among the antisocial subjects. Profiles were quite consistent and stable across the middle school years. Predictor variables of school success or failure included math achievement, school discipline contacts, and attendance.

- Webster, L., & Wood, R. W. (1990). Discipline: A problem in rural schools today? *Rural Educator*, 11(3), 19-21.

Responses of 225 South Dakota elementary school principals indicated that (a) 88% had a written discipline policy; (b) 47% followed a specific discipline model; and (c) 81% considered student discipline to be no problem or a minor problem. Responses are categorized by school district size.

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Rethinking Student Discipline

Alternatives That Work

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Of all the problems facing any educator, student discipline continues to be the most challenging. Discipline is the single greatest source of frustration for principals and teachers, and it is a self-perpetuating source of negative feelings among students, parents, and the general public.

Yet, methods of control used in schools are generally punitive: from cleaning erasers to suspension. Yet punitive approaches, whether reward or punishment, treat discipline as a matter of employing "techniques" to control behavior. Unfortunately, such techniques produce little self-discipline and only short-term compliance.

What's needed, the authors suggest, is to view discipline as part of the larger learning system — a long-term training that is expected to produce mental as well as moral improvement. An effective school administrator must establish a school environment that supports good student behavior.

The authors see school discipline as an organizational issue that requires a school-wide approach to be successful. Taking a proactive and preventive approach, the authors' alternative view of discipline incorporates a balance between punishment and positive reinforcement that promotes the development of student self-discipline or the use of appropriate behavior in a given situation. The critical importance of positive parent/teacher expectations, treating students with respect, and good communication are also made clear.

Case studies and examples are included throughout to illustrate the issues, dilemmas, and model programs discussed. This readable, useful book also provides the reproducible letters, worksheets, and problem-solving forms administrators and teachers need to implement and sustain a student self-discipline program.

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